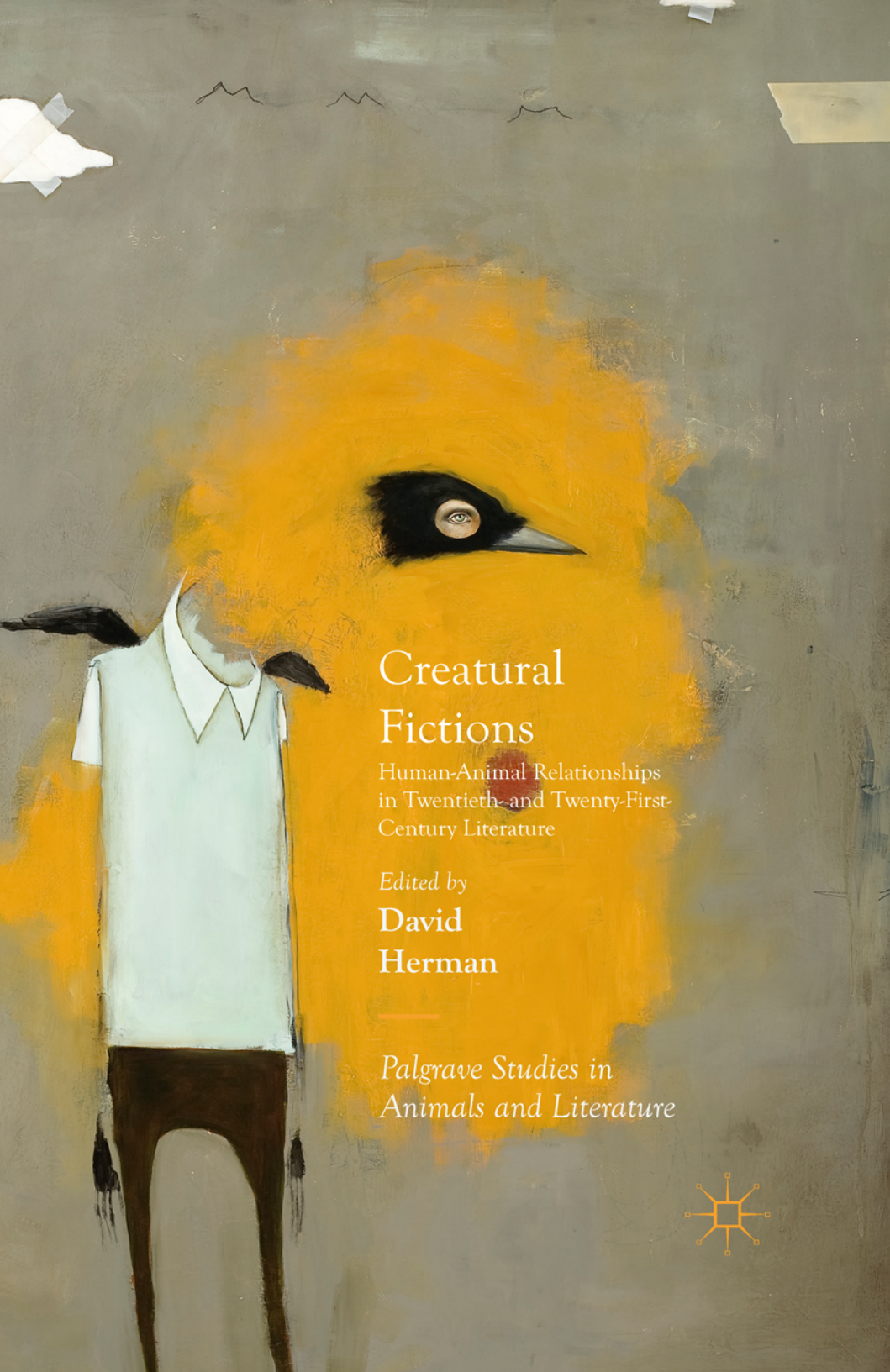
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CHAPTER 12

# Ghostly Presences: Tracing the Animal in Julia Leigh's *The Hunter*

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## Entitlements

To be speaking of *the* animal in the title of this chapter is of course a provocation. In fact, one of the crucial concerns of contemporary human-animal studies and critical animal studies is to point out that there is no undifferentiated mass of animals that could be subsumed under a general moniker that suggests sameness while maintaining a fundamental difference from human beings. The "animal question," as it were, may even be called the central concern of any scholarly inquiry into animality, anthropocentrism and, more generally, the humanist veneer of the (post)humanities. "The animal, what a word," Derrida famously cried out: "it is an appellation that men have instituted, a name they have given themselves the right and the authority to give to the living other" (23).

But is pointing to sameness the route to resolving the conundrum of "the living other"? The history and practice of anthropomorphism is a troubled one, and numerous critics would be quick to emphasize that uncritical identification with animal others is just as problematic as claims to an unfathomable alterity. Conceived either as an "epistemological sin" (see Daston 39)—the bastard offspring of the long-disputed "pathetic fallacy"—or as "a virtuoso but doomed act of complete empathy" (Daston and Mitman 7), the belief in total identity has, just like Pandora's box, a bunch of problems at its core. From

didactic and appropriative literary texts or the fuzzy and rather oxymoronic debate about "becoming-animal," with which I engage later, to Timothy Treadwell's tragic and real example of such an attempt, captured by Werner Herzog in his film *Grizzly Man* (2005)—those who cross the species boundary do that at their own peril. And too often, it seems, they perish in making the attempt.

This is why granting animals their wildness and otherness—even within the realm of fiction—is a relevant objective of literary human-animal studies (Bartosch, *EnvironMentality* 189–217; Bartosch, "Poetics of Failure") as well as of critical animal studies. And in the realm of applied ethics and animal rights theory, too, theorists seem to agree that due to the alterity of animals, negative rights are required that guarantee freedom from human interference with animal others. (Jeremy Bentham's oft-quoted question whether animals can suffer is probably the best known example. For a discussion of the negativity of this question, see Derrida 27–8.) But change seems to loom at the horizon. In *Zoopolis: A Political Theory of Animal Rights*, Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka, starting from the simple observation that "the animal welfare movement is at an impasse" (1), argue that the focus on negative qualities and an abysmal difference between humans and animals eventually reinscribes the dilemma of the sameness/difference nexus:

> If we overemphasize animals' separateness from us . . . we are at just as much risk of moral error as if we overemphasize our similarity by projecting onto them needs, desires, or interests that are distinctly our own. (38)

It is, apparently, an awareness of difference in degree rather than category that ought to frame our relationship with animals. Thus, Donaldson and Kymlicka call the concentration on negativity—negative rights in animal rights theory, but their critique can easily be extended to the negative epistemology of critical animal studies—a "strategic error" as well as a stance that is "unsustainable intellectually" (9). They claim that instead of focusing on the otherness of animals, we must realize that we are "a part of a shared society with innumerable animals" already (8), and that we must not restrict our perception to the wondrous alterity of the animal other. The pathetic fallacy lurks both behind the assumption of sameness and the proclamation of difference, it seems. But how could we then negotiate what Donaldson and Kymlicka call relationality; a sense of animal selves with which we share our environments and, thus, some of our

moral duties? How, to be more precise, could literature be of help in outlining and bringing closer to us this relational, more-than-human entanglement of creatureliness?

Arguably, while the theoretical ideas developed in *Zoopolis* might be a valuable contribution to political practices and legal debates about human-animal relations, its liberal-political claim that we need "more . . . precise terms" (34) for these relations is less germane when it comes to the realm of literary fiction. If, as I suggested earlier, the human-animal question is more a matter of degree than of categories, and if we need a negotiation of the diversity of relations, encounters, and connections between human and other animals, we need readings of literary representations of creatureliness that allow for uncertainty, not ontological precision, to be staged, experienced, and understood.

Coming back to my title: Once the assumption that "the" animal is a workable category is destabilized, the title can be seen as a provocation. But at the same time, it is a helpful starting point for thinking about creaturely encounters. If there is nothing definite in the definite article, this grammatico-morphological marker or "function word" takes on an almost deictic quality, pointing to a particular animal, possibly, in a particular time and a particular space. It may even point to a particular moment of configuration or assemblage; a moment, as Donna Haraway puts it, when "[f]igures collect the people through their invitation to inhabit the corporeal story told in their lineaments"—a literary experience, as it were, of the "material-semiotic nodes or knots in which diverse bodies and meanings coshape one another" (Haraway 4).

Mapping out this sort of assemblage or configuration is what I am after in this chapter, and I describe how Australian writer Julia Leigh's 1999 novel *The Hunter* (1999) deals with that peculiar, fragile yet forceful idea of human and nonhuman bodies and meanings being brought into a mutually shaping relationship. On the surface level, *The Hunter* tells the story of the search for, and eventual extinction of, the last living specimen of the thylacine, also known as the Tasmanian tiger. Instead of being granted access to this specific animal's mind, however, readers follow instead the eponymous "Hunter" on his quest to track down the animal. In the course of events, the hunter seemingly succeeds in becoming-animal in the most primordial and masculinist sense as he hunts and kills the (female) marsupial, and he also shows uncharacteristic and unfamiliar kindness to a single mother and her two kids whom he loses, however, after a catastrophic event. Both quests are driven by the hunter's incessant

search for traces of the tiger as well as the peculiar form of empathy that is engendered by this search. Following these traces but constantly revising assumptions about which animal may have left them, the text also questions what "becoming," let alone becoming-animal in Deleuze and Guattari's sense (see section 3), ultimately entails. As I argue, Leigh's mode of narration is likely to leave readers uncertain about the benefits of becoming-animal, and it is by virtue of this uncertainty that the narrative opens up the possibility of understanding creaturely relations. By thus opening a conversation between text, worldly companions (and antagonists), and reader, I seek to redefine the function of reading in the context of the debates mentioned previously. At the same time I seek to explore the role of "environmental texts" in discussions that have primarily been conducted in the domain of philosophy, rather than literary studies, thus far, my claim being that creatureliness as a relational condition can best be explored by the cautious hermeneutics required for the interpretation of literary fiction.

## Tracing Aesthetics

Scholarship concerned with the relation between environments and texts, such as that conducted under the heading of ecocriticism, seems just the paradigm to address the questions outlined previously, and it has employed the notion of an environmental text as the medium through which the confusing complexities and challenges described in my previous section could be negotiated. Given its relevance and popularity, it is surprising that the idea of an environmental text is notoriously hard to define; after all, it is one of the crucial concepts of ecocriticism and often defines the corpora of texts studied by ecocritics. One of the most widely quoted and still influential definitions (see Gurr, "Emplotting" 71) comes from Lawrence Buell who in *The Environmental Imagination* (1995) sets up a list of criteria that define an environmental text. Such a text must, Buell claims, present the nonhuman environment "not merely as a framing device," for instance, "but as a presence that begins to suggest that human history is implicated in natural history" (7). Second, he demands that an environmental text show that "human interest is not understood to be the only legitimate interest" and that "human accountability is part of the text's ethical orientation" (7). Moreover, the environmental text should provide us with "[s]ome sense of the environment as a process rather than as a constant or a given" (7–8). However, this definition is not without problems. As Dominic Head remarks, "narrative fiction

would seem to be peculiarly resistant to the operation of ecocriticism" in terms of a study of environmental texts because the novel in particular is "too much a product of its social moment to ruminate usefully on the route to the post-industrial world" envisioned in environmental texts (Head 32).

One can of course avoid this problem if an environmental text is defined solely in terms of content or authorial intention. In that scenario, environmental texts must be concerned with nature or ecology; they depict animals or climate change; and they teach, warn, or admonish us human beings. Yet a definition of this sort would mostly apply to didactical pamphlets or exhortatory fictions. Such a stance then reduces literature to a predetermined function instead of engaging with its manifold potentials. On the other hand, letting go of the idea of an ecological message is just as problematic. There would hardly be a difference between Ian McEwan's *Solar* and Michael Crichton's *State of Fear* (while J. M. Coetzee's *Lives of Animals* would just manage to remain on the list). But the problem remains that the focus on a clear-cut ecological message seems to instrumentalize literature, not only for the sake of didacticism, but also with regard to the functions and the role of literary fiction in general. In contrast, I think that ecocritical scholarship should rather rethink long-held assumptions about the role of aesthetic experience and its connection with ethics; such scholarship should regard as its central question the relational aspects of aesthetics "by locating the aesthetic outside the subject/object dualism that defines the arena of modern epistemology," as Marc Fellenz suggests ("Trace of Kinship"). "Indeed," Fellenz maintains, it is in "aesthetic experience [that] the subject and object are not entirely separate, for such experience is grounded on the *shared origin* of observer and observed, their *natural* connectedness" (emphases original)—a sense of kinship, as it were.

Lawrence Buell seems to come to a comparable conclusion when in *The Future of Environmental Criticism* (2004) he claims that "environmentality is a property of any text" (25). However, this formulation breeds new questions. One wonders, for instance, whether such a broad focus would not eventually dull the ecocritical lens. How could "environmentality" be part of *any* text, and how would an ecocritical reading, then, differ from other readings that are not primarily concerned with ecology, ethics, and the environmental crisis?

In this chapter, I suggest a middle ground between content orientation and the belief that environmentality is simply a constituent of *every* text; specifically, I focus on how aspects of literary form bear on the key questions that ecocriticism and literary animal studies need to

consider. While, arguably, the ecocritical content orientation has so far led to an understanding of the environment as a natural domain located somewhere outside the human subject, I believe that concerns with the role and function of literary fiction will have to reconsider environmental aspects not as an outside of the human alone but as a process of entanglement between human and nonhuman beings, thus opening avenues for thinking about human-animal relations without overemphasizing either sameness or difference. The process of reading and interpreting will therefore be an ambivalent, dialectical one that leads away from one's point of view in order to offer a glimpse of the nature "out there" and the animals within it—only to ultimately lead back to ourselves, the nature within us and the animals that we are.[1]

## Ethical Translations

In an essay on human-animal communication and interaction in the novels of Witi Ihimaera, Linda Hogan, Zakes Mda, and Amitav Ghosh, Jonathan Steinwand discusses the fascination humans feel for whales and dolphins, with these animals often being seen as somehow hybridized, "[b]reathing air, yet at home in the water rather than on land" (182). This ambivalent status that for many people results in fascination but likewise exoticizes these ambassadors of the charismatic megafauna links up with what Steinwand calls the "neocolonial stakes of cold war cetology" (183): a commodified ecological exoticism against which literary texts might articulate a critique of "the ways in which [readerly] cosmopolitanism contributes to forms of globalization" and animal exploitation (193). He therefore proposes to read fictional texts about human-whale encounters, which often appeal to "cosmopolitan readers lured by the postcolonial and ecopastoral exotic," with an alertness "for openings and gaps where the novels . . . turn back on readers to tease or challenge" (185). In other words, Steinwand is interested in those moments of ambivalence that, in the present chapter, I seek to turn into opportunities for rethinking the sameness-difference dichotomy described previously. Steinwand, building on Pablo Mukherjee's work on postcolonial environments, demands that we develop an "attentiveness to gaps, silences, and the inevitable slippage of translation in relating to animal others" (192)—a challenge that Leigh's *The Hunter* helps us to address.

"Slippages of translation" are in fact fundamental for *The Hunter*. In the text, human-animal relations are bound to be insecure and peculiar especially because they are established between a human

being and a mere animal *trace*. That is to say, by focusing on an allegedly extinct animal such as the "Tasmanian tiger,"[2] the text endorses what some scholars celebrate as a fundamentally subversive event of becoming-animal with a sense of fragility and undecidability: what good does it do to "become-animal" if the result is extinction? The elusiveness of the animal and the poetics of extinction that inform the novel produce slippages of translation and stress the potential downside of becoming-animal while leaving the reader "sadder and wiser," as Steinwand describes the effect of the cetacean fiction he examines (192).

Although Leigh's novel tells of M, the eponymous "Hunter," apart from this detail the character is almost as elusive as the animal that he is hunting. This elusiveness is underscored by the way the text is narrated. The narrative is mostly presented in the form of an interior monologue by M; somewhat paradoxically, as Kylie Crane argues, this monologue creates in the reader a sense of distance from M (Crane, *Myths of Wilderness* 134). Moreover, the hunt, the animal's death, and the very fact of extinction are presented in the present tense, with this technique estranging the story from the deep time[3] of evolution and extinction, thus adding to the general tone of isolation.

Yet, *The Hunter* links this negative tone with ideas of becoming and with the modes of understanding M deems crucial for the hunt. This is how the novel develops means for rethinking environmental issues by foregrounding notions of absence, negativity and, as Scott Brewster (2009) puts it, the "peculiar aesthetic" of "sublime loss." This strategy allows for a reading that likewise focuses on human-animal relations and on what remains unsaid about these relations within the novel; it also licenses a defamiliarizing reading of M's relation with the animal, or, in Deleuze and Guattari's terms, his becoming-animal. Most importantly, as the idea of becoming-animal is connected to the idea of extinction, it becomes detached from the metaphoricity and sentimentality in which some literary interpretations of becoming-animal have trafficked. In the words of Linda Williams, "Deleuze and Guattari's notion of 'becoming-animal'" is a "romantically conceived 'primordial' call for a human reconnection with difference" (42) and says less about human-animal relations than about the two thinkers' engagement with Heidegger's concept of being. And with remarkable defiance, Donna Haraway famously refutes this version of the Oedipal animal in favor of a more nuanced notion of interspecies encounter, writing "I am not sure that I can find in philosophy a clearer display of misogyny, fear of aging, incuriosity about animals, and horror at the ordinariness of flesh" (30).

I endorse Haraway's critique of Deleuze and Guattari's masculinist and incurious stance toward creatureliness and argue that *The Hunter* offers a literary engagement with the intricacies of the "romantically conceived 'primordial'" relation between man and animal. In *The Hunter*, becoming-animal is exposed as an instrumental concept that readers may very well dislike. It is, in any case, not presented as a metaphorical "sweeping-away of identities"—"undoing identity," as Steve Baker calls it (68)—but rather as an eventually detrimental and painful loss of identity. In refuting such notions of becoming-animal and the metaphorical appropriation of animality, and by wryly juxtaposing the protagonist's animalization with the stabilizing of his human identity through M's "fantasies of becoming a family man" (Brewster), *The Hunter* links personal loss and ecological extinction and negotiates dimensions of the relationality of human and nonhuman animals in light of creaturely needs and desires.

As numerous critics have noted, Leigh exercises remarkable narrative creativity in producing these associations or linkages. In particular, the text turns a narrative technique typically associated with immediacy—present tense narrative with internal focalization—into a strategy that emplots estrangement and isolation. Crane states that the "use of the present tense . . . evokes a sense of immediacy" which underscores an urgency of message (*Myths of Wilderness* 133); but at the same time, she points out, the present tense creates a tension with the time frames of the novel. Since the novel deals with questions of extinction, evolution and, hence, geological deep time, the decision to follow a single human protagonist's perception seems absurd. This impression grows stronger the more we try to get to the core of M's character. Instead of relinquishing human presence, the text stresses the reliance on human focalization but renders the distance between world and focalizer only greater.

The same can be said about the identity work in which M engages via his focalization. "[T]he entire text," as Crane says about several passages in which M constructs and relates stories-within-the-story that serve as a means to create a personal history, can be read as if M is "telling *himself* what he thinks and who he is" (*Myths of Wilderness* 134, emphasis original). By telling himself (and, thus, readers) stories of this kind, M creates a narrative identity that contrasts with the deep time it is related to; the scope of evolution and extinction, the text suggests, is far beyond human grasp and concern. Hence, interfering with these processes comes across as wrong—not because of moral appeals but because of the inadequacy and incommensurability of the timeframes at stake.

The narrative mode also touches upon questions of sympathy and feeling-with. While M tries to think himself into the creature he is preying on, the reader inevitably tries to think himself into the major character, M. The structure of the narrative would seem to support this effort, but it does not necessarily do so. Crane explains this ambivalence, stating that M is a "doubly estranged man": "A man estranged from himself, and estranged from the 'world' in the wilderness" (*Myths of Wilderness* 134). And Steve Himmer, also commenting on the tension inherent in the character, describes M as a personification of the "rule of both colonizer and colonized" (Himmer 49). That M incorporates such dualisms—which, as Crane has shown, can be found in the binary denomination of *Thylacinus* and "Tassie Tiger" as well—is highly relevant for the functioning or failure of the text in terms of what Paul Ricœur has termed the "synthesis of the heterogeneous" involved in emplotment: an "integrating dynamism that draws a unified and complete story from a variety of incidents" that allows literature to "redescribe a reality inaccessible to direct description" (Ricœur, *Time and Narrative* (II) 8 ; *Time and Narrative* (I) xi). Likewise the dualisms structuring Leigh's account have potentially significant effects on readerly reception.

Already in the very first passage of the book, as M's plane experiences turbulence, "a religious man, he thinks, might now decide to pray" (Leigh 3). But M is silent, only to perceive later that "[t]here is nobody to greet him at the airport, no rent-a-car desk, and so no smiling rent-a-car girl. The fat woman, he sees, is being comforted by a fat man" (3). To read this threefold negative construction as an instance of sadness, and to detect a desire for being comforted that is staged by the *absence* of comfort, is a readerly interpretation that is encouraged by the lack of authorial comment or heterodiegetic guidance. Already on the first page, the reader is thus introduced to M's dualistic ways of thinking—a rent-a-car desk needs a rent-a-car girl, and a fat woman needs a fat man. What does M need?[4]

By inducing this question the text underscores the significance of M's interior voice. For instance, in a scene in the middle of the story, M returns to the then abandoned house of Lucy and her family, unaware of the fact that a fire has destroyed the house and forced the surviving inhabitants to flee. Before, this house had served as his base camp as well as, increasingly, a place he regarded as home. On returning there in order to prepare for a second hunting foray, M yearns for the social contact with Lucy and her family and probably even a romantic relationship with Lucy: "What he feels, he realises, is nervous . . . It is not an uncomfortable feeling, so he allows it to continue . . . That's

what he wants, he wants them to be happy to see him" (Leigh 132). When he finds the house deserted and realizes that the family has left after the catastrophic event, his inner voice suggests that his return to the hunt is motivated by these events and his emotions. The failure of finding a counterpart in the human world and the emotional stress of heartache are expressed by a brief moment of what might be called "becoming-hunted-animal," that is, a physical sensation in M that resembles what is entailed by the hunter's disemboweling of prey or the act of taxidermy: "M has had his chest scooped out. His skin has been peeled from his body. He can dislocate his jaw and fill the universe with a stone-grey roar" (135). The text here stresses the vulnerability of M's creaturely being rather than the glorious potentiality of becoming-animal and thus points to moments of possible human-animal recognition, rather than transformation (see Walther 588 for a comparable reading of the intricacies of becoming-animal). By returning to the hunt, M, it seems, seeks to pass out of this terrible sensation of loss, and to displace his inner desperation.

After M has learned that the house had been abandoned, "[h]e sighs, and the sigh comes from a place inside him so deep nothing could be deeper" (134). From the pub where he is informed about what had happened to Lucy and the children, "[h]e makes a quick exit. Nothing" (137). The voice of experience, M's inner landscape, is blank. From that perspective, his hunting can be read differently this second time: it is not zeal anymore but utter hopelessness that motivates the deadly encounter with the thylacine. In narratological terms, we could say that now that M lacks any human counterpart, the narrative has lost one of its crucial dualisms; his decision to return to the hunt remains the only dualism left, and it informs and challenges the notion of M's becoming.

This is why the depiction of the relation between the hunter and the hunted and of the seemingly primordial situation of hunting serves as a crucial element of the narrative. The following passage describes M's "favourite trick":[5] "he changes shape, swallows the beast…His arm is bent at the elbow, and a paw, not a hand, rests against his bony, convex chest" (91). This passage comments on the Darwinian idea of transformation through evolution; it also illuminates the idea of a sensitive communion between man and animal, the idea of thinking like an animal, and the idea of becoming—but most basically, it narrates M's thoughts, the interior of his character. M's interior monologue is indeed the text's dominant feature; whereas the plot is rather simple and advances in an almost linear movement, it is the experientiality (I borrow this term from Monika Fludernik) of

the hunt, enacted through M's interior commentary, which provides the narrative with its power. Despite the *character* M's elusiveness, his solitary demeanor and his archaic fantasies about the hunt, the *sensitive medium* M is narrated as a figure torn between insecurity and loneliness, and his attempts at becoming serve as a temporary relief from this tension.

## A Trace of Kinship

Throughout the narrative, isolation is a constant motif, and there are numerous mysteries about M, his motivation, and the company that he works for. Although negative reviews of the novel have noted how these mysteries make it difficult to interpret the text, few have linked them to the novel's peculiar mode of focalization and its deliberate refusal of insider perspectives (see Brewster 3). But these are not the only reasons why *The Hunter* is "not an easy read" (Crane "Tracking" 105). Crane remarks that despite its accessible prose style the text simply "asks difficult questions" (105), and she comments on the novel's elusiveness with regard to questions of extinction, responsibility, and identity. Since M ultimately hunts and kills the last remaining specimen of the thylacine, *The Hunter* is primarily a story of a successful killing. It is also an account of a man's lonely pursuit of the animal, with Leigh following "macho solitude to its ultimate conclusion" (Jordan). In this context, it is remarkable that the novel has been read as relevant to ecological concerns at all. As Richard Kerridge suggests, "the environmentalist viewpoint is so crushingly absent from th[e] narrative perspective" (97) that it might be difficult to actually say what makes an ecocritical reading, or a reading of the environmental ethics of this novel, possible.

One could conclude that *The Hunter* simply is not an environmental text. Or is it? Commenting on Kerridge's claim, Crane argues that "the environmentalist viewpoint is present . . . to a certain extent, but in ways that might not be picked up by non-local readers" ("Tracking" 110). The novel could, after all, be called postcolonial in both setting and theme. Crane therefore provides some clues for a postcolonial reading of the role of the thylacine and discusses the spatial and temporal dimensions of the narrative[6] in a lucidly argued interpretation. However, since the novel is, like many other postcolonial novels circulating in the contemporary "world republic of letters" (Casanova), situated in a "global literary marketplace" (Brouilette; see also Huggan), its environmental effect cannot ultimately be bound to local knowledges and the ethical positions negotiated in the text.

Crane signals her awareness of these issues when she argues that "Kerridge's 'ghostly presence' of environmentalism is . . . the reader" ("Tracking" 111). Although the text features conservationists, hippies, and the character of Jarrah Armstrong, whose *Bioethics for Another Millenium* serves as the eco-ethical guideline for the "greenies" around, the readerly share in the environmentalist perspective is not connected to any notion of environmentalism formulated in the text. It is rather related to the effect of distance and isolation created by Leigh's estranging use of interior monologue, and it is connected to the narrative mode in general. Leigh "refuses to romanticise the act of being-in-nature," instead playing "the game of frustrated narrative expectation," as Tony Hughes d'Aeth claims (22). As Hughes d'Aeth further notes, "the expected melodrama [of an environmental novel] does not emerge because the would-be villain—the biotechnical company—remains frustratingly outside the narrative" (22). The hunter himself is not a proper character at all, he goes on to argue, "but an agent"—"quite literally a 'terminator'" (25).[7] But if the would-be villain is absent, then so is the would-be hero, the thylacine. The ethical dynamic that makes the novel an environmental text is therefore a consequence of an engagement with the narrative *gestalt* in the interplay with readerly expectation and the staging of what Hughes d'Aeth calls the "ethical impasse" of humanism and (deep) ecology (26–7). Absence and loss are the tropes that determine readerly experience, and they are directly linked to the dualisms constituting the literary experience of a text that could therefore be described, in the words of Thom van Dooren, as a particular extinction narrative (see also Heise for a description of narrative and scientific implications of contemporary ideas of extinction).

At one point during the hunt, Leigh details M's state of mind in the following terms: "Soon, he thinks, soon he'll be there. He wishes he was there now, up where it was calm and pure, with space enough for a man to think" (Leigh 139). Ultimately, M aches for primordial solitude just as much as for the environment in which his imaginative transformation renders him an archaic living being. But this final wish is not fulfilled. A look at the staging of M's experientiality reveals that his success as a hunter corresponds to his failure as a sensitive being, and this is the reason for the disquiet and sadness that tracking M's experiences is likely to produce in readers. Thus, during the last moment of interior narration, after he has killed the thylacine, M reflects that "[t]he job is done . . . There, now he is the only one" (167). Success beats dualistic tension—but it does so at the cost of M's identity. The hunter's success determines the solitude of

M as a sentient creature. What follows is a shallow conversation with two conservationists he meets on the way and the concluding passage where "M walks away . . . The sun breaks from behind a reef of clouds and this cheers him although he knows the sun does not shine for one man alone" (Leigh 170). Again, the focus on M's experientiality raises questions for the reader: Does M realize that the sun does not shine for a single man only but rather for everyone, or does he rather feel that the sun does not shine for humankind *alone*?

Given the intense spirit of loneliness and Leigh's playing and unfolding of what Brewster calls the peculiar aesthetic of sublime loss, it seems plausible to interpret the passage as indicating M's realization that the sun does not shine for someone who is alone. This existential loneliness is the unthinkable condition of anthropogenic extinction. In another popular environmental text, Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*, one of the characters, the cetologist Piya, puts it this way: "Just suppose we crossed that imaginary line that prevents us from deciding that no other species matters except ourselves. What'll be left then? Aren't we alone enough in the universe?" (Ghosh 301). M *has* crossed the line, and so have "we" as human beings.[8] His victory over the animal (which is "our" victory, too)[9] leads to the psychic eclipse of M's experientiality. Since the hunter's success is determined by his capacity for becoming-animal for a given moment in time, the text convincingly questions the very idea by showing the devastating psychic effects of a successful—and instrumentalized—process of becoming. Because he can become-animal, M can kill the animal; but the ultimate extinction of the thylacine results in the death of M's self because creaturely existence is marked by relationality.

## Conclusion

The difficult questions Crane mentions in her analyses of *The Hunter* foreclose the easy answer of either absolute sameness or total otherness as the defining characteristics of human-animal relationalities. Instead, the text allows us to experience a set of profound ambiguities. The most important one, I believe, is the tension of a dualist response to the world that is resolved in a glorious moment of becoming which ultimately leads to solitude and, consequently, to M's emotional extinction. Quite unlike the cautious relationality I discussed earlier in the context of the theoretical framework of *Zoopolis* and my stance toward creaturely being, M illustrates the dangers of an idea of becoming that overlooks the complexity and multisidedness of human-animal encounters.

The way in which M's quest and decline are bound to his experientiality as well as to the context of geological time and extinction suggests strategies for negotiating the ambiguous, relationally determined human-animal nexus demanded by the positive animal rights framework discussed at the beginning of this chapter. Unlike the liberal rights framework proposed by Donaldson and Kymlicka, however, *The Hunter* stages the inextricable connection between human and other animals through imaginaries of loss and loneliness and by calling into question the metaphor of becoming-animal. If we draw these strands together, we see that the specific—environmental—function of *The Hunter* depends on the interpretive act. Readers are encouraged to rethink their textual engagement with the diegetic matter of the novel and to understand the "ghostly presence" of environmentalist concerns that haunt the novel. In light of Gérard Genette's definition of the *diegesis* as the "spatiotemporal universe of the story" (Genette 94n12), Kerridge's conclusion that the environmental perspective is "ghostly" in Leigh's text is surprisingly accurate: although environmentalists are present *in* the novel, the presence of environmentalism in *The Hunter* is literally ghostly—it is extradiegetic and, thus, otherworldly. This environmental presence is established in a world different to the one the story is set in—through us, in our world. And since it comes into being through readerly activity, this ghostliness connects the storyworld to the extratextual world and allows the environmental effect to be an effect that is both narrative and ethical.

## Notes

1. I have developed this argument in more detail in *EnvironMentality—Ecocriticism and the Event of Postcolonial Fiction* (2013), where I present an approach to exploring the relationships among the artwork, issues of hermeneutics, and literary texts' connection to the extratextual world.
2. In calling the animal "allegedly" extinct, I am not commenting on the cryptozoological claim that the Tasmanian tiger may still exist; rather, I want to point to the fact that in the world of the novel, a last specimen does exist. The hunted animal in Leigh's novel actually lacks a unanimous designation. For a detailed discussion of the intricacies of the labels *Thylacinus cynocephalus* and "Tasmanian Tiger," see Crane, "Tracking" and Crane, *Myths of Wilderness* 133–55.
3. Deep time was originally a geological concept deriving from the work of James Hutton and Charles Lyell; as Beer notes (5–6), the

concept had a strong influence on nineteenth-century epistemology and narrative.

4. For a detailed discussion of the role and relevance of setting up and engaging with binary oppositions in literary fiction, see Gurr, "Figures of Thought."
5. Greg Garrard also notes that this scene is crucial because Leigh successfully associates "the rhetoric of closeness to nature with such a morally bankrupt individual" (Garrard 157).
6. See Crane (*Myths of Wilderness* 134–6 and 139–42) for a discussion of the role of roads, maps, and wilderness imaginaries and how they are useful for a topochronic discussion of the novel; see also Crane ("Tracking") for an account of the relationship between extinction and ethics in Leigh's text.
7. Hughes d'Aeth discusses Leigh's playful engagement with this idea in a conversation M has with his host Lucy and her child, Bike: "'So you'll be back soon,' says Lucy. 'I'll be back' 'I'll be back,' mimics Bike in a thick German accent." See Hughes d'Aeth (25) and Leigh (126).
8. Crane reminds us that 'M' can stand "for anything: Man, Master, Metaphor . . . " See Crane, *Myths of Wilderness* 134.
9. Especially in the postcolonial context, the hermeneutic challenge of the "we" is important: who are we and are we experiencing the human conquest of nature, or a colonial conquest of nature? Arguably, the anthropocentric arrogance of M is closely related to issues of colonial subjugation (see Himmer 49).

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